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CAPTAIN INGLEFIELD'S
NARRATIVE,

Price, ONE SHILLING.

Entered at Stationers-Hall.

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CAPT. INGLEFIELD'S
NARRATIVE,

CONCERNING

The LOSS of His MAJESTY'S SHIP

The CENTAUR, of Seventy-four Guns:

AND THE

Miraculous Preservation of the PINNACE, with the CAPTAIN, MATE,
TWO, and TEN of the CREW, in a Traverse of near 300 Leagues on
the great Western Ocean; with the NAMES of the PEOPLE SAVED.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY,

A NEW EDITION, Corrected.

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M.DCC.LXXXIII.

CONFIDENTIAL

ALTERNATIVE

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information regarding the proposed acquisition of the [redacted] system.

2. The proposed acquisition of the [redacted] system is being considered as a potential solution to the [redacted] problem.

3. The [redacted] system is currently being evaluated by the [redacted] committee.

4. The [redacted] system is expected to be completed by [redacted].

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7. The [redacted] system is expected to be completed by [redacted].

(109)
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The least wind increased the water
thoughts to say the ship before the
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I in this been determined. The im-
propriety of leaving the country, even
in the last extremity, was the object.

THE Centaur left Jamaica in rather
a leaky condition, keeping two hand-
pumps going, and when it blew fresh,
sometimes a spell with a chain-pump
was necessary. But I had no apprehen-
sion that the ship was not able to en-
counter a common gale of wind.

In the evening of the 16th of Sep-
tember, when the fatal gale came on, the
ship was prepared for the worst weather
usually met with in those latitudes; the
mainfail was reefed and set, the top-
gallant masts struck, and the mizen-yard
lowered down, though at that time it
did not blow very strong. Towards
midnight it blew a gale of wind, and the

B

ship

ship made so much water that I was obliged to turn all hands up to spell the pumps. The leak still increasing, I had thoughts to try the ship before the sea. Happy I should have been, perhaps, had I in this been determined. The impropriety of leaving the convoy, except in the last extremity, and the hopes of the weather growing moderate, weighed against the opinion that it was right.

About two in the morning the wind lulled, and we flattered ourselves the gale was breaking. Soon after, we had much thunder and lightning from the S. E. with rain, when it began to blow strong in gusts of wind, which obliged me to haul the mainsail up, the ship being then under bare poles. This was scarcely done, when a gust of wind, exceeding in violence every thing of the kind I had ever seen, or had any conception of, laid the ship upon her beam ends. The water forsook the hold, and appeared between decks, so as

to

to fill the mens hammocks to leeward: the ship lay motionless, and, to all appearance, irrecoverably overset. The water encreasing fast, forced through the cells of the ports; and scuttles in the ports, from the pressure of the ship. I gave immediate directions to cut away the main and mizen-masts, hoping, when the ship righted, to wear her. The mizen-mast went first upon cutting one or two lanyards without the smallest effect on the ship; the main-mast followed, upon cutting the lanyard of one shroud; and I had the disappointment to see the foremast and bowsprit follow. The ship upon this immediately righted, but with great violence; and the motion was so quick, that it was difficult for the people to work the pumps. Three guns broke loose upon the main deck, and it was some time before they were secured. Several men being maimed in this attempt, every moveable was destroyed, either from the shot thrown loose from

the lockers, or the wreck of the deck. The officers who had left their beds (when the ship overset) naked, in the morning, had not an article of clothes to put on, nor could their friends supply them.

The masts had not been over the side ten minutes, before I was informed the tiller had broke short in the rudder-head; and before the chocks could be placed, the rudder itself was gone.— Thus we were as much disastered as it was possible, lying at the mercy of the wind and sea: yet I had one comfort, that the pumps, if any thing, reduced the water in the hold; and as the morning came on, (the 17th) the weather grew more moderate, the wind having shifted in the gale to N. W.

At day-light I saw two line-of-battle ships to leeward; one had lost her fore-mast and bowsprit, the other her main-mast. It was the general opinion on board

board the Centaur, that the former was the Canada, the other the Glorieux. The Ramilies was not in sight, nor more than fifteen sail of merchant-ships.

About seven in the morning I saw another line-of-battle ship a-head of us, which I soon distinguished to be the Ville de Paris, with all her masts standing. I immediately gave orders to make the signal of distress, hoisting the ensign on the stump of the mizenmast, union downwards, and firing one of the forecastle guns. The ensign blew away soon after it was hoisted, and it was the only one we had left remaining; but I had the satisfaction to see the Ville de Paris wear and stand towards us. Several of the merchant-ships also approached us, and those that could, hailed, and offered their assistance: but depending upon the King's ship, I only thanked them, desiring, if they joined Admiral Graves, to acquaint him of our condition.

tion. I had not the smallest doubt but the Ville de Paris was coming to us, as she appeared to us not to have suffered in the least by the storm, and having seen her wear, we knew was under government of her helm; at this time also it was so moderate, that the merchantmen set their top-sails, but approaching within two miles, she passed us to windward; this being observed by one of the merchant ships, she wore and came under our stern, offering to carry any message to her. I desired the Master would acquaint Captain Wilkinson, that the Centaur had lost her rudder, as well as her masts, that she made a great deal of water, and that I desired he would remain with her, until the weather grew moderate. I saw this merchantman approach afterwards, near enough to speak the Ville de Paris, but I am afraid that her condition was much worse than it appeared to be, as she continued upon that tack. In the mean time all the quarter-deck guns were thrown over-board,

board, and all but six which had overset of the main-deck. The ship lying in the trough of the sea, laboured prodigiously. I got over one of the small anchors, with a boom, and several gun-carriages,—veered out from the head door by a large hauser to keep the ship's bow to the sea; but this, with a top-gallant-sail upon the stump of the mizenmast, had not the desired effect.

As the evening came on it grew hazy, and in squalls blew strong. We lost sight of the Ville de Paris, but thought it a certainty that I should see her in the morning. The night was passed in constant labour at the pumps. Sometimes the wind lulled; the water diminished; when it blew strong again, the sea rising, the water again increased.

Towards the morning of the 18th, I was informed there was seven feet water upon the Kelson; that one of the Winches was broke; that the two spare
 ones

ones would not fit, and that the hand pumps were choaked. These circumstances were sufficiently alarming, but upon opening the after-hold to get some rum up for the people, we found our condition much more so.

It will be necessary to mention, that the Centaur's after-hold was inclosed by a bulk-head at the after-part of the well; here were all the dry provisions and ship's rum stowed upon twenty chaldron of coals, which unfortunately had been started in this part of the ship, and by them the pumps were continually choaked. The chain pumps were so much worn, as to be of little use, and the leathers, which, had the well been clear, would have lasted twenty days or more, were all consumed in eight. At this time it was observed, that the water had not a passage to the well, for here there was so much, that it washed against the orlop deck. All the rum, twenty-six puncheons; all the

provisions, of which there were two months, in casks were stove; having floated with violence, from side to side, until there was not a whole cask remaining: even the staves that were found upon clearing the hold were most of them broke in two or three pieces. In the fore-hold we had a prospect of perishing: should the ship swim, we had no water but what remained in the ground-tier, and over this all the wet provisions and butts filled with salt-water were floating, and with so much motion, that no man could with safety go into the hold. There was nothing left for us to try but bailing with buckets at the fore-hatchway and fish-room; and twelve large canvas buckets were immediately employed at each. On opening the fish-room we were so fortunate as to discover that two puncheons of rum which belonged to me had escaped. They were immediately got up, and served out at times in drams; and had it not been for this relief,

relief, and some lime-juice, the people would have dropped.

We soon found our account in bailing; the spare pump had been put down the fore-hatchway, and a pump shifted to the fish-room; but the motion of the ship had washed the coals so small, that they had reached every part of the ship, and the pumps soon choaked. However the water by noon had considerably diminished by working the buckets; but there appeared no prospect of saving the ship if the gale continued. The labour was too great to hold out without water; yet the people worked without a murmur, and indeed with cheerfulness.

At this time the weather was more moderate, and a couple of sparrs were got ready for shears to get up a jury-foremast; but as the evening came on, the gale again encreased. We had seen nothing this day but the ship who had lost her main-mast, and she appeared to be

be as much in want of assistance as ourselves, having fired guns of distress; and before night I was told her foremast was gone.

The Centaur laboured so much, that I had scarce a hope she could swim 'till morning. However, by great exertion of the chain-pumps and bailing we held our own, but our sufferings for want of water were very great, and many of the people could not be restrained from drinking salt-water.

At day-light, the 19th, there was no vessel in sight; and flashes from guns having been seen in the night, we feared the ship we had seen the preceding day had foundered. Towards 10 o'clock (forenoon) the weather grew more moderate, the water diminished in the hold, and the people were encouraged to redouble their efforts to get the water low enough to break a cask of fresh water out of the ground tier; and some of the most reso-

late of the seamen were employed in the attempt. At noon we succeeded with one cask, which, though little, was a seasonable relief. All the officers, passengers and boys who were not of the profession of seamen, had been employed thrumming a sail which was passed under the ship's bottom, and I thought had some effect. The shears were raised for the foremast; the weather looked promising, and the sea fell; and at night we were able to relieve at the pumps and bailing, every two hours. By the morning, the 20th, the fore-hold was cleared of the water, and we had the comfortable promise of a fine day. It proved so, and I was determined to make use of it with every possible exertion. I divided the ship's company, with the officers attending them, into parties to raise the jury-foremast; to heave over-board the lower-deck guns; to clear the wrecks of the fore and after-holds; to prepare the machine for steering the ship, and to work the pumps. By night the
after-

after hold was as clear as when the ship was launched; for to our astonishment there was not a shovel-full of coals remaining, twenty chaldron having been pumped out since the commencement of the gale.—What I have called the wreck of the hold, was the bulk-heads of the after-hold, fish-room and spirit-rooms. The standards of the cock-pit, an immense quantity of staves and wood, and part of the lining of the ship, were thrown overboard, that if the water should again appear in the hold, we might have no impediment in bailing. All the guns were overboard, the fore-mast secured, and the machine, which was to be similar to the one with which the Ipswich was steered, was in great forwardness; so that I was in hopes, the moderate weather continuing, that I should be able to steer the ship by noon the following day, and at least save the people on some of the Western Islands. Had we had any other ship in company with

us,

us, I should have thought it my duty to have quitted the Centaur this day.

This night the people got some rest by relieving the watches; but in the morning, the 21st, we had the mortification to find that the weather again threatened, and by noon blew a storm. The ship laboured greatly, and the water appeared in the fore and after-hold and encreased. The Carpenter also informed me that the leathers were nearly consumed; and likewise that the chains of the pumps, by constant exertion, and the friction of the coals, were nearly rendered useless.

As we had now no other resource but bailing, I gave orders that scuttles should be cut through the decks, to introduce more buckets into the hold; and all the sail-makers were employed night and day in making canvas buckets: and the orlop deck having fallen in on the lar-beard-side, I ordered the sheet-cable to
be

be roused overboard. The wind at this time was at W. and being on the larboard-tack, many schemes had been practised to wear the ship that we might drive into a less boisterous latitude, as well as approach the Western Islands; but none succeeded: and having a weak Carpenter's crew, they were hardly sufficient to attend the pumps; so that we could not make any progress with the steering machine. Another sail had been thrummed and got over, but we did not find its use; indeed there was no prospect but in a change of weather. A large leak had been discovered and stopt in the fore-hold, and another in the Lady's-hole, but the ship appeared so weak from her labouring, that it was clear she could not last long. The after-cockpit had fallen in, the fore-cockpit the same, with all the store-rooms down; the stern-post was so loose, that as the ship rolled the water rushed in on either side in great streams, which we could not stop.

Night

* Night came on with the same dreary prospect as on the preceding, and was passed in continual effort and labour.— Morning came, the 22d, without our seeing any thing, or any change of weather, and the day was spent with the same struggles to keep the ship above water, pumping and bailing at the hatchways and scuttles. Towards night another of the chain-pumps was rendered quite useless, by one of the rollers being displaced at the bottom of the pump, and this was without remedy, there being too much water in the well to get to it: we also had but six leathers remaining, so that the fate of the ship was not far off. Still the labour went on without any apparent despair, every officer taking his share of it, and the people were always cheerful and obedient.

During the night the water encreased; but about seven in the morning, the 23d, I was told that an unusual quantity of water appeared all at once in the forehold,

hold, which, upon my going forward to be convinced, I found but too true; the stowage of the hold ground-tier was all in motion, so that in a short time there was not a whole cask to be seen. We were convinced the ship had sprung a fresh leak. Another sail had been thrumming all night, and I was giving directions to place it over the bows, when I perceived the ship settling by the head, the lower deck bow-ports being even with the water.

At this period the Carpenter acquainted me the well was stove in, destroyed by the wreck of the hold, and the chain pumps displaced, and totally useless. There was nothing left but to redouble our efforts in bailing, but it became difficult to fill the buckets from the quantity of staves, planks, anchor stocks, and yard-arm pieces which were now washed from the wings, and floating from side to side with the motion of the ship. The people, who till this

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period

period had laboured as determined to conquer their difficulties without a murmur or without a fear ; seeing their efforts useless, many of them burst into tears and wept like children.

I gave orders for the anchors, of which we had two remaining, to be thrown overboard, one of which (the spare anchor) had been most surprisngly hove in upon the fore-castle a-mid-ships, when the ship had been upon her beam-ends, and gone through the deck.

Every time that I visited the hatch-way I observed the water encreased, and at noon it washed even with the orlop deck. The carpenter assured me the ship could not swim long, and proposed making rafts to float the ship's company, whom it was not in my power to encourage any longer with a prospect of their safety. Some appeared perfectly resigned, went to their hammocks, and desired their messmates to lash them in ;
others

others were lashing themselves to gratings and small rafts; but the most predominant idea was, that of putting on their best and cleanest clothes,

The weather about noon had been something moderate, and as rafts had been mentioned by the Carpenter, I thought it right to make the attempt, though I knew our booms could not float half the ship's company in fine weather, but we were in a situation to catch at a straw; I therefore called the ship's company together, told them my intention, recommending to them to remain regular and obedient to their officers. Preparations were immediately made to this purpose; the booms were cleared; the boats, of which we had three, viz. cutter, pinnace, and five-oar'd yawl, were got over the side; a bag of bread was ordered to be put in each, and any liquors that could be got at, for the purpose of supplying the rafts; I had intended myself to go into

the five-oared Yawl, and the Coxswain was desired to get any thing from my steward that might be useful. Two men, Captains of tops, of the fore-castle, or Quarter-masters, were placed in each of them, to prevent any man from forcing the boats, or getting into them, until an arrangement was made. While these preparations were making, the ship was gradually sinking, the orlop decks having been blown up by the water in the hold, and the cables floated to the gun-deck. The men had for some time quitted their employment of bailing, and the ship was left to her fate.

In the afternoon the weather again threatened, and in squalls blew strong; the sea ran high, and one of the boats, the Yawl, stove along-side and sunk. As the evening approached, the ship appeared little more than suspended in the water. There was no certainty that she would swim from one minute to another; and the love of life, which I believe

lieve never shewed itself later in the approach to death, began now to level all distinctions. It was impossible indeed for any man to deceive himself with a hope of being saved upon a raft in such a sea; besides that the ship in sinking, it was probable, would could carry every thing down with her in a vortex, to a certain distance.

It was near five o'clock, when coming from my cabin I observed a number of people looking very anxiously over the side; and looking myself, I saw that several men had forced the Pinnace, and that more were attempting to get in. I had immediate thoughts of securing this boat before she might be sunk by numbers. There appeared not more than a moment for consideration; to remain and perish with the ship's company, whom I could not be any longer of use to, or seize the opportunity which seemed the only way of escaping, and leave the people who I had been so well satisfied

with on a variety of occasions, that I thought I could give my life to preserve them:—This indeed was a painful conflict, and which I believe no man can describe, nor any man have a just idea of, who has not been in a similar situation.

The love of life prevailed—I called to Mr. Rainy, the master, the only officer upon deck, desired him to follow me, and immediately descended into the boat, at the after-part of the chains, but not without great difficulty got the boat clear from the ship; twice the number that the boat would carry pushing to get in, and many jumping into the water. Mr. Baylis, a young gentleman fifteen years of age, leaped from the chains after the boat had got off, and was taken in. The boat falling astern became exposed to the sea, and we endeavoured to pull her bow round to keep her to the break of the sea, and to pass to windward of the ship; but in the attempt she was nearly filled; the sea ran too high,
and

and the only probability of living was keeping her before the wind.

It was then that I became sensible how little, if any thing better, our condition was than that of those who remained in the ship: at best, it appeared to be only a prolongation of a miserable existence. We were altogether twelve in number, in a leaky boat, with one of the gun-whales stove, in nearly the middle of the Western Ocean, without compass, without quadrant, without sail, without great coat or cloak; all very thinly cloathed, in a gale of wind, with a great sea running!—It was now five o'clock in the evening, and in half an hour we lost sight of the ship. Before it was dark, a blanket was discovered in the boat. This was immediately bent to one of the stretchers, and under it as a sail we scudded all night, in expectation of being swallowed up by every wave, it being with great difficulty that we could sometimes clear the boat of the water
before

before the return of the next great sea; all of us half drowned, and sitting, except those who bailed at the bottom of the boat: and without having really perished, I am sure no people ever endured more. In the morning the weather grew moderate, the wind having shifted to the southward, as we discovered by the sun. Having survived the night we began to recollect ourselves, and think of our future preservation.

When we quitted the ship the wind was at N. W. or N. N. W. Fayall had bore E. S. E. 250 or 260 leagues. Had the wind continued for five or six days, there was a probability that running before the sea we might have fallen in with some one of the Western Islands. The change of wind was death to these hopes; for should it come to blow, we knew there would be no preserving life but by running before the sea, which would carry us again to the northward, where we must soon afterwards perish.

Upon

Upon examining what we had to subsist on, I found a bag of bread, a small ham, a single piece of pork, two quart bottles of water, and a few of French cordials. The wind continued to the Southward for eight or nine days, and providentially never blew so strong but that we could keep the side of the boat to the sea, but we were always most miserably wet and cold. We kept a sort of a reckoning, but the sun and stars being sometimes hid from us for the twenty-four hours, we had no very good opinion of our navigation. We judged at this period, that we had made nearly an E. N. E. course, since the first night's run (which had carried us to the S. E.) and expected to see the island of Corvo. In this, however, we were disappointed, and we feared that the Southerly wind had driven us far to the Northward. Our prayers were now for a Northerly wind. Our condition began to be truly miserable, both from hunger and cold, for on the

E

fifth

fifth day we had discovered that our bread was nearly all spoiled by salt water, and it was necessary to go to an allowance. One biscuit, divided into 12 morsels, for breakfast, and the same for dinner; the neck of a bottle broke off, with the cork in, served for a glass, and this filled with water was the allowance for twenty-four hours to each man. This was done without any sort of partiality or distinction: but we must have perished e'er this, had we not caught six quarts of rain water; and this we could not have been blessed with, had we not found in the boat a pair of sheets, which by accident had been put there. These were spread when it rained, and when thoroughly wet, wrung into the kidd with which we bailed the boat. With this short allowance, which was rather tantalizing than sustaining, in our comfortless condition, we began to grow very feeble, and our clothes being continually wet, our bodies were in many places chafed into sores.

On

On the 13th day it fell calm, and soon after a breeze of wind sprang up from the N. N. W. and blew to a gale, so that we run before the sea at the rate of five or six miles an hour under our blanket, till we judged we were to the Southward of Fayall, and to the Westward 60 leagues; but blowing strong we could not attempt to steer for it. Our wishes were now for the wind to shift to the Westward. This was the fifteenth day we had been in the boat, and we had only one day's bread, and one bottle of water remaining of a second supply of rain. Our sufferings were now as great as human strength could bear, but we were convinced that good spirits were a better support than great bodily strength; for on this day Thomas Mathews, Quarter-Master, the stoutest man in the boat, perished from hunger and cold: on the day before he had complained of want of strength in his throat, as he expressed it, to swallow his morsel, and in the night drank salt-

water, grew delirious, and died without a groan. As it became next to a certainty that we should all perish in the same manner in a day or two, it was somewhat comfortable to reflect, that dying of hunger was not so dreadful as our imaginations had represented. Others had complained of the symptoms in their throats; some had drank their own urine; and all, but myself, had drank salt-water.

As yet despair and gloom had been successfully prohibited, and as the evenings closed in, the men had been encouraged by turns to sing a song, or relate a story, instead of a supper: but this evening I found it impossible to raise either. As the night came on it fell calm, and about midnight a breeze of wind sprang up, we guessed from the Westward by the swell, but there not being a star to be seen, we were afraid of running out of our way, and waited impatiently for the rising sun to be our compass.

As

As soon as the dawn appeared, we found the wind to be exactly as we had wished, at W. S. W. and immediately spread our sail, running before the sea at the rate of four miles an hour. Our last breakfast had been served with the bread and water remaining, when John Gregory, Quarter-master, declared with much confidence that he saw the land in the S. E. We had seen fog-banks so often, which had the appearance of land, that I did not trust myself to believe it, and cautioned the people (who were extravagantly elated) that they might not feel the effects of disappointment; 'till at length one of them broke out into a most immoderate swearing fit of joy, which I could not restrain, and declared he had never seen land in his life if what he now saw was not it.

We immediately shaped our course for it, though on my part with very little faith. The wind freshen'd; the boat went through the water at the rate of
five

five or six miles an hour; and in two hours time the land was plainly seen by every man in the boat, but at a very great distance; so that we did not reach it before ten at night. It must have been at least twenty leagues from us when first discovered; and I cannot help remarking, with much thankfulness, on the providential favour shewn to us in this instance.

In every part of the horizon, except where the land was discovered, there was so thick a haze that we could not have seen any thing for more than three or four leagues. Fayall by our reckoning bore E. by N. which course we were steering, and in a few hours, had not the sky opened for our preservation, we should have encreased our distance from the land, got to the eastward, and of course missed all the Islands. As we approached the land, our belief had strengthened that it was Fayall. The island of Pico, which might have revealed

vealed it to us had the weather been perfectly clear, was at this time capped with clouds; and it was some time before we were quite satisfied, having traversed for two hours a great part of the island, where the steep and rocky shore refused us a landing. This circumstance was bore with much impatience, for we had flattered ourselves that we should meet with fresh water at the first part of the land we might approach; and being disappointed, the thirst of some had encreased anxiety almost to a degree of madness; so that we were near making the attempt to land in some places where the boat must have been dashed to pieces by the surf. At length we discovered a fishing canoe, which conducted us into the road of Fayall about midnight; but where the regulation of the port did not permit us to land 'till examined by the health officers: however I did not think much of sleeping this night in the boat, our pilot having brought us some refreshments of bread,
 wine

wine and water. In the morning we were visited by Mr. Graham, the English Consul, whose humane attention made very ample amends for the formality of the Portuguese. Indeed I can never sufficiently express the sense I have of his kindness and humanity, both to myself and people; for I believe it was the whole of his employment for several days contriving the best means of restoring us to health and strength. It is true, I believe, there never were more pitiable objects. Some of the stoutest men belonging to the Centaur were obliged to be supported through the streets of Fayall. Mr. Rainy, the Master and myself, ~~were~~, I think, in better health than the rest; but I could not walk without being supported; and for several days, with the best and most comfortable provisions of diet and lodging, we grew rather worse than better.

*Fayall, 13th
October, 1782.*

J. N. INGLEFIELD.

NAMES